

VZCZCXRO2937
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #0287/01 0261358
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 261358Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2724
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEUITH/TLO ANKARA TU
RUEHAK/TSR ANKARA TU
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000287

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [OSCE](#) [PINR](#) [TU](#) [EU](#)

SUBJECT: ERDOGAN GIVES SHAKY PERFORMANCE BEFORE EU
AMBASSADORS

Classified by Polcouns Janice G. Weiner; reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: PM Erdogan, recovering from the flu, gave what contacts described to us as a "rambling" and "nearly incomprehensible" performance at a January 20 lunch meeting with EU ambassadors in Ankara. After a positive though unremarkable opening speech, he made a weak statement on Iran, despite coaching from the UK ambassador. He then claimed, incorrectly, that Avian Influenza (AI) is present in several EU countries and launched into a diatribe on the PKK.
End Summary.

PM Opens With Positive Speech

¶2. (C) Several EU-member-state diplomats told us the meeting started out well enough, with Erdogan reading a prepared statement before TV cameras. In the statement, which our contacts regarded as positive though unremarkable, the PM stressed that the GOT is determined to carry on with reforms and advance Turkey's EU accession negotiations. As regards Turkey-EU relations, the PM said, "I personally see the glass not only as half full but as gradually filling up. This is a source of pleasure for me." He acknowledged that Turkey has not reached the "ideal point" in the implementation of reforms, but averred that greater progress will come as individuals and institutions absorb the spirit of the recent legal amendments.

¶3. (U) Erdogan pointedly stated that he expects the EU screening process to be completed in 2006, and wants the EU to open negotiations on the two *acquis* chapters that have already been screened -- Science and Research, and Education and Culture. He also called on the EU to seriously examine the GOT proposal to simultaneously lift all restrictions imposed on Cyprus and the "TRNC" and warned, "The EU membership of the Greek Cypriot administration must not be used as a pretext to stay mute on the intransigent attitude of the Greek Cypriot leadership."

Weak Statement on Iran

14. (C) After the speech, the press departed and Erdogan began a one-hour Q&A session during which contacts described him as manic -- at times shouting -- and emotional. Contacts said he appeared pale and exhausted; one of the PM's advisors told us Erdogan had been battling the flu for several days. The EU ambassadors made it clear that Iran is the top issue on the EU foreign policy agenda. The UK ambassador, seated next to Erdogan, tried to assist the PM by giving him an outline of what the EU would like him to say on Iran. Nevertheless, the PM gave what a Danish contact described as an "exceptionally weak" statement. Erdogan explained that Iran has assured Turkey its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, and said Iran has a right to develop such a program. (Note: Similarly, Erdogan's chief advisor Avci told us the previous day that he did not believe Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons. End Note.) If Iran develops nuclear weapons, he continued, then Turkey would be concerned and would start to take into account the attitudes of other countries toward the Iranian program.

Defensive Comments on AI...

15. (C) Erdogan recapped steps the GOT had taken to combat AI and pledged full transparency in the ongoing effort. He then started to ramble, asserting that AI could afflict any country, not just the developing world. He claimed AI is present in the UK, the Netherlands, and Belgium, adding that 10 million chickens have been killed in the UK. After the meeting, several ambassadors said privately that they were shocked that the PM was so badly informed.

ANKARA 00000287 002 OF 002

...And the Kurdish Issue

16. (C) The UK and Slovak ambassadors praised Erdogan for his groundbreaking August speech in Diyarbakir, during which he referred to Turkey's "Kurdish problem." They asked what steps, such as economic development, the PM had planned to follow through on the initiative for the southeast. This was intended as a softball question from two sympathetic ambassadors. Erdogan responded with a 15-minute diatribe on the evils of the PKK. At one point, the PM lashed out at the audience, yelling, "I don't care if the PKK is on the EU list of terrorist organizations because you're not doing anything about it." Several contacts told us that Erdogan, at this and other points in the meeting, behaved as if he were trying to score points with a domestic audience.

Comment: Let's Hope It Was the Flu

17. (C) We can only hope that Erdogan's politically tone deaf performance was a one-off caused by a bout of the (non-avian) flu, and that he will be more attuned to his audience the next time he addresses an EU crowd.

WILSON